

I agree basically with the FISTS proposal. For too many years now, the ARRL has been trying to reduce the qualifications to become an amateur radio operator with the sole purpose of increasing numbers and the use of the bands. I feel that amateur radio is not best served by this attitude. We already have Citizens band and the FRS to allow radio communications to untrained individuals. What amateur radio needs is more highly trained operators in many modes of communication. To be sure, reducing or eliminating the Morse Code requirement, will allow more operators on the already crowded amateur high frequency bands. Unfortunately, the result will be more intense crowding due to the relatively wideband nature of single sideband transmissions.

Another reason for maintaining proficiency in Morse Code is more technical. A1 transmissions at any given time are more likely to be readable over a given path than Sideband. It is much easier for the human ear to pull a single tone out of the noise floor than the many frequencies of a sideband transmission.

Amateur radio has had a long history of aiding the public good through many instances of maintaining communications in emergencies. Many lives have been touched through our efforts. I, for one, would be terribly horrified should only one life be lost or an injury occur because no trained Morse operators were available. I am certain the FCC and many other government agencies feel the same.

The ARRL claims that 70% of its members never use Morse code. I don't know how they obtained this figure. I for one use Morse 90% of the time I am on the air as do most of my friends. To be sure many others do not, but I maintain the ARRL figure is mistaken and in its own self interest. If anyone believes Morse Code is unused, they should listen to the lower ends of the amateur bands on any evening. There is plenty of A1 activity, maybe even more than sideband.